DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 638 FL 022 476

AUTHOR Falk, Beverly; And Others
TITLE Taking a Different Look: How the "Primary Language Record" Supports Teaching for Diverse Learners.
PUB DATE Apr 94
NOTE 45p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 4-8, 1994).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; Child Development; Classroom Techniques; Cultural Context; *Diagnostic Tests; Elementary Education; Identification; Instructional Design; Interviews; *Language Tests; Learning Processes; Parent Participation; Professional Development; Screening Tests; *Special Education; Standardized Tests; *Student Placement; Teacher Education; Testing; *Test Use
IDENTIFIERS *Primary Language Record

ABSTRACT

A study investigated current and potential uses of the "Primary Language Record" (PLR), an assessment instrument for evaluating and supporting the development of students, particularly in literacy-related areas. The PLR uses focused interviews with students and families, systematically recorded teacher observations, and rating scales of the continuum of progress in literacy learning to inform teachers about students' cultures, languages, past experiences, and interests. In the study, 20 New York City elementary school teachers discussed experiences using the PLR with students of diverse needs and backgrounds, and the utility of specific features for assessing and supporting learning. The study also examined the instrument's impact on aspects of school life, particularly professional development of teachers and student placement decisions. Results are reported through anecdotal information and synthesis. It was found that the PLR supports diversity by providing culturally informed insights into family context and student attitudes, recording direct evidence of individual learning processes, and providing a developmental continuum for learning. Participating teachers credit the PLR with positively influencing their approaches to student learning and their own teaching, changing instructional strategies, and providing previously unnoted evidence of student progress. The instrument is appended. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 375 638

Taking a Different Look: How the Primary Language Record Supports Teaching for Diverse Learners

By Beverly Falk, Susan MacMurdy, and Linda Darling-Hammond

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Beverly Falk

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

FL022476

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Taking a Different Look: How the *Primary Language Record* Supports Teaching for Diverse Learners

by Beverly Falk, Susan MacMurdy, and Linda Darling-Hammond

Introduction

In public schools throughout New York City teachers are using the *Primary Language Record* (*PLR*) (Barrs, Ellis, Hester, & Thomas, 1988) to take a "different look" at their elementary-age students. The *PLR* is an assessment instrument that provides a framework for both evaluating and supporting the comprehensive development of students, particularly in areas related to literacy. In contrast to the narrow picture of student progress offered by most traditionally-used standardized assessments, it provides multiple perspectives on students and their learning. Focused interviews with students and their families inform teachers about students' cultures, languages, past experiences, and interests. Systematically recorded teacher observations of students along with collections of samples of student work provide an evidence base of students' strategies and approaches to the learning process. Rating scales describing the continuum of progress in literacy learning provide a developmental context in which each individual's growth can be viewed. All of this data is used to inform both instructional practices and placement decisions for students. (See Appendix A for a sample copy of the *Record*.)

The *Primary Language Record* is currently being piloted by approximately 350 teachers in 62 elementary schools in 18 New York City community school districts through an initiative of the New York Assessment Network.[1] Because use of the *Primary Language Record* requires teachers who are knowledgeable about learning theory and child development and who are able to use a range of teaching strategies and approaches, NYAN supports teachers' professional development by providing on-

---

[1] The New York Assessment Network (NYAN) is an umbrella organization that coordinates and funds three assessment projects that have introduced the *PLR* in New York City public schools: The Accountability Project, a collaboration between the New York City Public Schools' Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment (OREA) and the Fund for New York City Public Education which employs consultants from the Center for Educational Options of City College; the Elementary Teachers Network of the Institute for Literacy Studies at Lehman College; and the Elementary School Assessment Project of the Center for Collaborative Education.

site consulting in schools, credit-conferring study groups, and summer institutes for teachers and administrators.

Efforts to develop this assessment project have grown out of an increasing awareness amongst educators, parents, and the general public that standardized assessments have limited ability to measure and demonstrate student learning and that, in addition, they often have harmful affects (Darling-Hammond, 1991; Edelsky & Harman, 1988; Medina & Neill, 1988). Because their multiple choice format measures progress and achievement in a uniform and limited fashion, standardized tests fail to reflect the variety of ways that individuals think, learn, or demonstrate what they know and can do (Gardner, 1983). As a consequence, they are unable to provide information that can be useful for teaching and learning.

These shortcomings are particularly problematic in large urban districts like New York City where racial, cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity are combined with diversity of students' abilities, attitudes, strengths, and learning styles. In many of the schools in these districts, learning is driven by the narrow demands of traditional assessments. Curriculum is often dominated by test-preparation activities rather than in-depth learning experiences and problem-solving opportunities that can build on diverse competencies and strengths (Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Education Policy, 1992; Dorr-Bremme & Herman, 1986; Resnick, 1989; Rothman, 1992). In addition, the high stakes consequences of test results influence placement decisions throughout students' school careers. This, in turn, impacts on the learning opportunities students receive - especially for those in lower tracks who, as a result of their placement in these tracks, get limited access to high quality courses, knowledge, teachers, and resources (Darling-Hammond, 1991; Oakes, 1985, 1990; Smith & Robinson, 1986; Wiggins, 1989).

Particularly for students with "special needs" or "learning differences" - including those who are placed in or identified for special education, Chapter I, and bilingual programs, as well as students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds - standardized tests are a problem. Current practices for the identification and evaluation of these students provide narrow and often inaccurate portraits of their abilities and their progress (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Both the teaching and testing they experience are generally dominated by disconnected rote skills in reading and arithmetic, failing to acknowledge other domains and competencies in which students may possess abilities and strengths (Kornhaber & Gardner, 1993). This type of teaching and testing not only fails to tap many performance abilities, it also tends to blur the distinctions between what students know and can do in the language of their

culture and the context of their community with what they can express and how they can perform in the English language and the dominant culture (Garcia & Pearson, 1994).

For example, questions on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) Test, used to identify and evaluate New York City students for bilingual programs, fail to differentiate between difficulties caused by lack of knowledge of the English language and difficulties caused by lack of conceptual understandings and general knowledge. (The test for children in the early grades contains questions such as: "Circle the picture that means 'above;'" or "Circle the picture that means 'inside.'" It is difficult to know whether a child's incorrect answer to these questions results from lack of fluency in the English language, lack of understanding of these particular concepts, or lack of understanding of what the test is trying to get at.)

Special education and Chapter I screening and evaluation procedures reflect a different type of problem. Because of their heavy reliance on multiple choice standardized tests, which demand artificially constructed uniform responses from diverse learners, they fail to reveal the partial knowledge students are often in the midst of developing or the sometimes more plausible logic of students that is grounded in responses derived from their experience. They thus are likely to overlook genuine progress that students are in the process of making. Also, frequently absent from screening and evaluation procedures for students in these special programs, is information about the context of learning, about how students think, what they understand, or the strategies they use in their learning. The focus is predominantly on students' deficits and often results in overly negative portraits, providing little information that is useful for teaching.

As New York City attempts to address these problems through the introduction of the *Primary Language Record,* a California initiative is also underway. There a cross-curricular adaptation of the *PLR* - the *California Learning Record* (*CLR*) is being used. The *CLR* is being piloted in schools throughout the state as an officially-sanctioned alternative for Chapter I screening and evaluation (Wilson & Adams, 1992). A body of evidence is emerging from this work suggesting that these assessments can provide information that is useful to instruction and that supports student learning (Barr & Cheong, 1993; Falk & Darling-Hammond, 1993; Miserlis, 1993). By helping teachers take a "different look" at students who bring different strengths, strategies, and styles to the learning setting, the *PLR* and *CLR* appear to promote improved student achievement, even for those who are most at risk.

This study explores further possibilities for *Primary Language Record* use.[2] It looks at how the *Primary Language Record* is being used with students of diverse needs and backgrounds, examining how specific features of the *Record* are useful for assessing and supporting their learning. It also examines the impact the *Primary Language Record* has had on a variety of aspects of school life, particularly on professional development and on student placement decisions.

How the *Primary Language Record* Supports Diverse Learners

Providing Information about Culture and Context

The *Primary Language Record* supports diversity by providing information that it is culturally informed. Through its parent and child interview sections it provides information about a student's home language and culture, about a student's home interests and experiences, and about family concerns, hopes, and expectations for the student's school experiences. This kind of information assists teachers and schools in providing learning experiences that take into account and are relevant to the differing needs of diverse student populations. The very act of soliciting this kind of information helps strengthen relationships between family and school and build partnerships respectful of each others' contributions.

The story of Tawana, a troubled ten year old at CES 42 in the Bronx, demonstrates how the Parent and Child Interview of the *Primary Language Record* provides information that is useful for instruction. Prior to this study Tawana had been spending much of her days in the office of Joan Gadson, the school's guidance counselor. Because Tawana's hostile and disruptive behavior had necessitated her being repeatedly removed from every fourth grade classroom in the school, Tawana was receiving not only counseling but also academic instruction from Joan. Joan decided to use the *PLR* to keep track of Tawana's emotional and academic progress so that Tawana's classroom teacher could stay informed of her growth. Joan described the situation during an interview:

---

[2] Information for this study was obtained during the spring months of 1993. The study is based on visitations of eight schools (in Brooklyn, Manhattan, and the Bronx), on interviews with 20 classroom teachers (representing general education, special education, gifted and dual language programs), 2 paraprofessionals, 1 guidance counselor, 2 principals, and 4 *PLR* staff developers, on informal conversations with several students, on extended observations in nine classrooms, and on the examination of *PLR* documents and student work.

> Tawana fought every day at the beginning of the term. As a result, she was moved from one class to another. She has been in every one of them. It got to the point where nobody wanted her... She is a youngster who has dealt with everyone [on the school staff] because of her emotional problems. No one believed that she was capable of doing the kind of work she eventually did in here.

The Parent Interview

Although Joan was accustomed to making contact with parents in her capacity as a guidance counselor, her use of the *PLR* began a shift in the way she related to them. In contrast to other home/school encounters, where families are passive recipients of the knowledge and judgments schools make about their children, the parent interview of the *PLR* is intended to forge working partnerships between families and schools. Joan used this section of the *PLR* to elicit family knowledge about their children, especially strengths to develop as learning resources.

This approach to home/school connections was especially helpful to Tawana and her family. Year after year they had been called into school to receive negative reports about Tawana's attitude and behavior. This made them become so defensive and wary of the school and so overwhelmed by Tawana's difficulties that they could not see beyond her problems. Joan became sensitized to this negativity through the exchanges that took place as she conducted *PLR* parent interviews. This awareness made her take special efforts, at each and every contact with Tawana's family, to include positive feedback on Tawana's work. In this way Joan offered them a new and more positive perspective on their child. Joan spoke about the effects of this approach:

> During the parent interviews with Tawana's family I believe we established a partnership built on trust. At first Tawana's foster mother wanted to talk only about Tawana's deficits. I encouraged her to talk about Tawana's strengths. She and her family came to see that their attitude and input at home is very important to Tawana's success in school. As trust with them began to grow, they began to see beyond Tawana's problems. I was then able to find out more about her strengths and interests from them and used this information to develop learning experiences for her. As Tawana was given opportunities to get involved in things she liked and could do, her behavior improved dramatically. Now for the first time she has been able to remain in a class without causing disruptions.

The Child Interview

Input from Tawana herself was also helpful in finding ways to support her learning. The Child Interview section of the *PLR* provided Tawana with an opportunity to reveal her interests, feelings, and past experiences as well as to reflect on her work, to assess her own progress, and to play an increasingly active part in her learning. Joan recorded this information from Tawana on the *PLR*:

> Tawana remembers loving to hear *Little Bo Peep* read to her a long time ago by someone in her house. She also loved *Puss in Boots*. Now she likes to read the sales part of the newspaper and the funnies. She likes to check the price of the furniture she might buy someday. She likes Ms. K, her third grade teacher. She also likes to fix food with her grandmother who is a good cook.

From this and other similar interview sessions Joan used what she learned about Tawana's interests to provide opportunities for her to develop them. For example, Joan asked Tawana to make lists of her favorite foods, to write recipes, and to write descriptions about the preparation of various meals. As Joan shaped instruction around Tawana's interests in this way, Tawana became increasingly involved in her work. Her disruptive behavior also decreased. Joan writes about this in the end-of-the-year *PLR* summary narrative:

> Tawana has become much more focused on her work. Her listening ability has improved because she has the freedom to talk about herself. Her greatest improvement is in her writing. She has the ability to put her thoughts on paper and she seems to enjoy doing so. Her classroom teacher reports fewer disruptions. Although she had previously been taken out of music class because of her attitude, she is back in the music room now. She sings beautifully and whenever she is singing she seems to become another person, totally involved in the song. Her foster family almost gave her up because of her problems but have reconsidered as she has improved.

As can be seen from this story of Tawana, a child whose special needs are of an emotional and behavioral nature, the *PLR* proved to be helpful in developing communication, creating curriculum, and establishing learning activities that guided Tawana to act more appropriately. By soliciting knowledge from Tawana and her family about her interests, learning styles, and goals for schooling, the *PLR* was instrumental in building a collaborative approach to her learning and in creating an increased sense of trust between her, her family, and her teachers. By engaging Tawana and her family in developing plans for her instruction, the *PLR* helped Tawana

get involved in and take charge of her own learning. The marked improvement of her behavior resulted from this involvement.

Tawana's story however, is not unique. An overwhelming majority of teachers interviewed for this study corroborate the usefulness of the Parent and Child Interview sections of the *PLR* in providing information about student literacy behaviors and interests, in improving home-school connections, and in involving families as partners in student literacy development.

Providing Direct Evidence of the Process of Student Learning

In addition to providing information about students' histories, cultures, languages, and interests, the *Primary Language Record* also provides direct evidence of students' learning. Documented teacher observations of their students combined with collections of samples of students' work demonstrate not only how students approach their learning experiences but also reveal the process of student knowledge in formation. How students function in the areas of talking, listening, reading, and writing are all noted in a variety of social and curricular contexts. (See Appendix B.) This information is then used to plan instructional practices that can support future learning.

Teacher Lucy Lopez's documented observations of seven year old Miguel, a bilingual/special education student at Brooklyn's PS 261, has given her insights into how he learns. She has subsequently used this information to develop a personalized, meaningful instructional program for him.

Miguel was referred to Lucy's classroom after being diagnosed as "learning disabled" with "Attention Deficit Disorder." Her early impressions of him were:

> He used to jump all over and never focus in. He could never remember what he had learned. He didn't listen and it used to make me mad.

Lucy's use of the *Primary Language Record* led her to look at Miguel in a different way, focusing on what he was able to do rather than on what he was *not* able to do. This helped her to identify Miguel's interests and strengths, the learning strategies that Miguel employed, as well as the competencies he mastered in reading and writing. The following entry from Miguel's *PLR*, backed up by collected samples of his work (see below) calls attention to these aspects of his literacy learning:

> Miguel enjoys looking at books and can retell stories. He memorized most of his favorite nursery rhymes with intonation and sang some of them. When reading he points to each word as he reads. He runs his

fingers across the page when reading unfamiliar texts and uses picture clues to read unknown words. His sight vocabulary is developing through the use of Key Words [a personal word bank developed from the child's own interests].
Miguel is developing interest in written expression in English. He enjoys writing on a variety of topics. He draws illustrations to go with his writing [see Figure 1]. At times he uses inventive spelling and is beginning to use sound/symbol relationships to spell unknown words [see Figure 2]. He also refers to his Key Words for correct spelling, looks around the classroom for words, or will ask a classmate to spell a word [see Figure 3].

Note how this description differs from the descriptions found in the "Functional Descriptions of Performance" section of Miguel's *Individualized Education Plan* (IEP) - the standard assessment instrument mandated system-wide for use in special education:

ACADEMIC
Miguel does not demonstrate strong word-attack skills.

Miguel does not read multi-syllabic words.

Miguel does not recognize content-related vocabulary.

Miguel does not identify and use signal (key) words to increase understanding of a reading selection.

Miguel does not read for a definite purpose: to obtain answers, to obtain general ideas of content, and for enjoyment.

Miguel does not identify the main idea of a passage.

Miguel does not use context clues to define unfamiliar words.

Miguel does not spell words at grade level.

Miguel does not write complete simple sentences..

SPEECH/LANGUAGE AND HEARING
Miguel is not able to use copular and auxiliary verb forms.

Miguel's IEP uses the phrase "Miguel does not" in every sentence. It is written in this way because it is designed to have teachers identify students' skills that are in need of remediation. It is no wonder then that, after presenting Miguel in the light of such deficits, the description of him should conclude with the summary Social/Emotional Description: "Miguel has a negative self-concept."

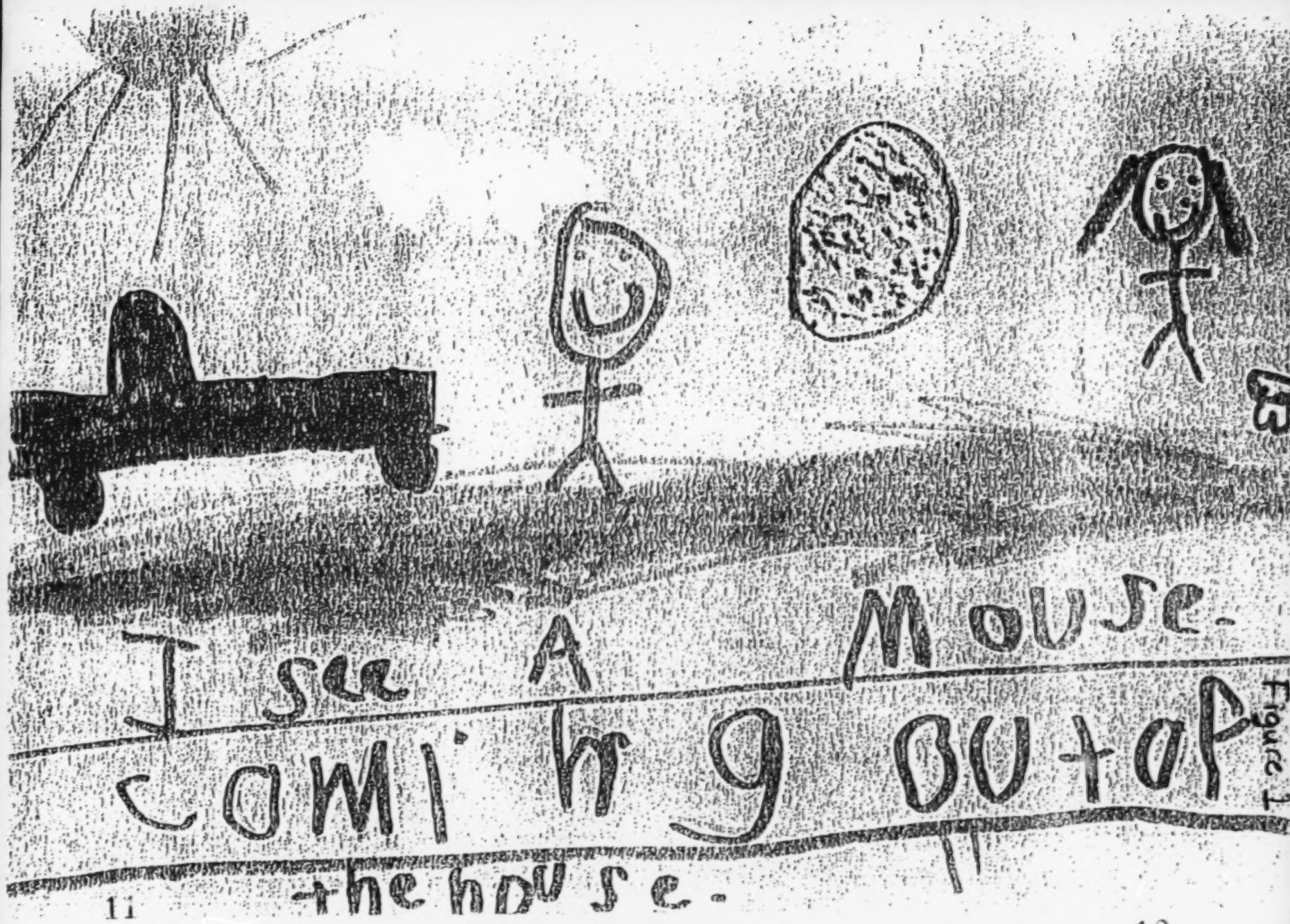
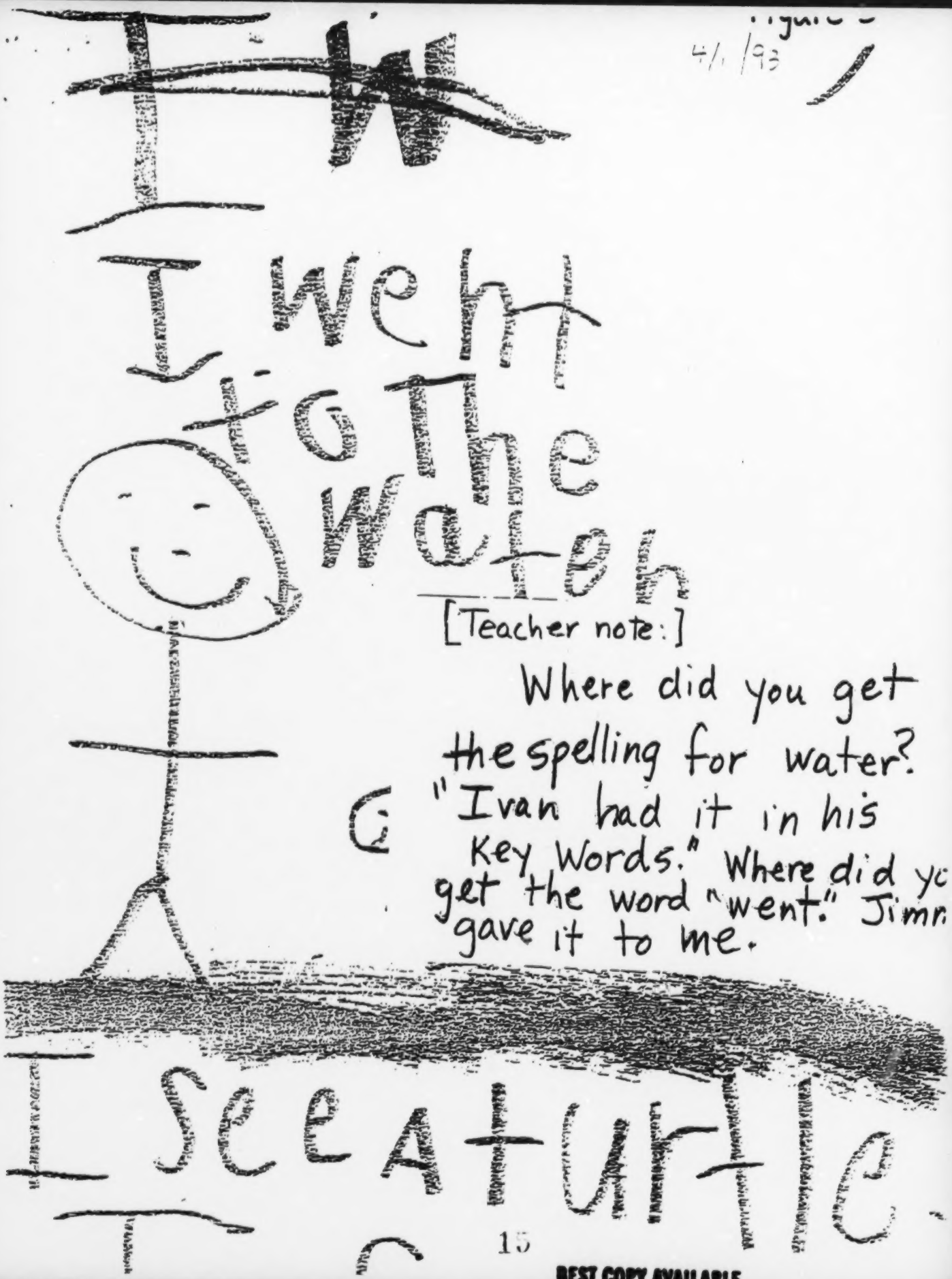


Figure 1

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

BEST COPY AVAILABLE


4/1/93
I went to the water
[Teacher note:]
Where did you get the spelling for water? "Ivan had it in his Key Words." Where did yo get the word "went." Jimn gave it to me.
I see a turtle

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The portrait of Miguel presented in the IEP is focused solely on what Miguel cannot do. It provides no information about what kind of a learner Miguel is. It gives no clues as to which strategies, approaches, or learning modalities he employs. Its disconnection from Miguel as a learner makes it unable to provide direction for how to proceed with appropriate instruction in support of his learning. It only calls for correctives to his problems with declarations of specific skills that should be mastered at specified levels of attainment. For example, in the "Annual Goals and Short-Term Objectives" section of Miguel's IEP, the following was written for the area of Communication Arts/Language:

> ANNUAL GOAL
> Miguel will improve listening skills.
>
> SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVE(S)
> Miguel will demonstrate comprehension skills and the ability to establish personal goals for listening by following 3 oral directions for a 3-step activity with an 80% level of accuracy.
>
> Fall Spring Summer Date of Mastery_____
>
> Miguel will demonstrate appreciation of literature read aloud by interpreting a story through a variety of art media (e.g., sculpture, puppetry, dioramas) with an 80% level of accuracy.
>
> Fall Spring Summer Date of Mastery_____

In contrast to the IEP's seemingly arbitrary pronouncements for what Miguel should be able to do, the *Primary Language Record* maps out plans for what Miguel should learn and eventually do based on the direct evidence of his teacher's observations, as well as her collections of his written work. In response to the *PLR*'s question, "What experiences and teaching have helped/would help development?" she made the following recommendations for Miguel's instruction:

> Provide him with familiar texts and simple pattern language books around themes that will capture his interest.
>
> Make copies of these books in both Spanish and English for Miguel to take home to read to his mother.

Supported Miguel's interest in developing a sight vocabulary by encouraging him to build up a collection of personally meaningful "key words" that can became both spelling and reading resources.

Encourage Miguel's social interest in writing by supporting his efforts to use his classmates as learning resources and supports.

Provide opportunities for involvement in class plays and presentations to foster Miguel's spoken language development.

This information is useful for teaching. Unlike the IEP and standardized test scores, that focus on what students cannot do and that provide little information about the learning process, these recommendations build on Miguel's interests, strengths, and learning strategies revealed through *PLR* documentation. They apply general knowledge of effective literacy learning as well as the specific insights into Miguel's process of developing understandings and of mastering complex tasks. In an interview, Miguel's teacher Lucy Lopez, explained why she finds the *PLR*: so useful.

> According to the tests, seven year old Miguel is still not 'on level', even though he has advanced and made great progress. The tests are not looking at what he can do. The *PLR* is much more helpful than the tests and much more realistic than the IEP. The IEP is not objective. You're not writing about anything you have observed. With the *PLR* you write about where the child is at now and you deal with the concrete.

Providing a Developmental Continuum for the Learning Process

Another feature of the *Primary Language Record* that is helpful in teaching and assessing diverse learners is the Reading Scales. They provide a framework for noting children's progress over time, describing the full spectrum of the developmental stages involved in becoming a reader. They provide a numerical score for each point along the literacy continuum - 1 for "Beginning Reader," 2 for "Non-Fluent Reader," etc. One reading scale, for younger children, charts children's progress as readers from dependence to independence. Another reading scale, for older children, plots the developing experience of readers, looking at the ways in which they broaden and deepen the reading of many kinds of texts. (See Appendix C for a copy of the Scales.)

Because they point out the full range of strategies and skills that encompass literacy proficiency, the scales serve as a guide to teachers' instruction. They provide a conceptual framework that helps teachers become more knowledgeable about the developmental processes involved in learning to read and write, which, in turn, strengthens their skills in recognizing and responding to the different needs of their students.

A look at T.J.'s *PLR* demonstrates how the scales can be a short-hand reference, accurately reflecting teacher observations of student progress. T.J., a bilingual fifth grader at P.S. 156 in the Bronx, had many difficulties as a reader when he entered Phyllis Liverpool's general education class. She initially placed T.J. at Stage #1 - An Inexperienced Reader - on the Reading Scale for older children.[3] Her observations of T.J., recorded in his *PLR*, corroborate closely with the rating and provide information about his approaches to reading:

> Talking and Listening:
> 9/92: T.J. appears to lack self-confidence. Rarely accepts a challenge. "I can't," "I don't want to," "It's wrong" are his excuses prior to participation in an academic activity.
>
> Reading:
> 9/92: T.J. appears to feel uncomfortable reading aloud to peers. Afraid of making an error. Tries to focus on context of story, but appears to have difficulty remembering sequence of events.
>
> Writing Samples:
> 10/92: Difficulty with phonics. Spanish and English letter sounds appear to confuse him.

These and additional observations that Phyllis made at regular intervals throughout the school year gave her insights about how to tailor her instructional program to be responsive to T.J.'s needs. Convinced that much of his discomfort and hesitancies with reading resulted from limited exposure to the pleasures of literature, she exposed him to a rich array of children's literature that included fiction, nonfiction, biography, poetry, and magazines. In addition, because T.J.'s Child Interview revealed that no one in his family spoke or read English, Phyllis made special efforts in class to read stories aloud, to read with him individually, and to have him read aloud with others in small groups. She also encouraged him to borrow both Spanish and English books from the classroom library so that he could continue his reading activities at home. She assigned him writing activities of a personal as well as formal nature, always including regular feedback on his work.

This type of instruction and support produced sustained progress for T.J. as the school year went by. It is reflected in his end-of-the-year *PLR* summary narrative report:

---

[3] See description of Stage 1 on Reading Scale 2 in Appendix C.

> T.J. appears to be more focused in reading and writing and has developed an interest in connecting his home language with school. T.J. created stories (in May), worked with other Spanish-speaking children to create signs, notices and stories in their home language.
> T.J. began as an Inexperienced Reader Level (Stage 1) and has advanced to a Moderately-Experienced/Experienced Reader (Stage 3/4). He borrows class books on a weekly basis and has re-read several texts for pleasure. His writing has become clearer, more detailed and now includes questions regarding possible outcomes in stories.

T.J.'s progression to Stage 3/4 on the Reading Scale accurately mirrors the progress demonstrated by the evidence in his *PLR*.[4] His story is but one of many students for whom teachers have found the *PLR* scales to be a good indicator of their students' progress. Teacher Joan Cherney, at Brooklyn's PS 261, notes the scales' usefulness in her classroom:

> The reading scales help me think about where kids are at. They provide a continuum for looking at kids' growth. They help me to think about how I can help kids get to the next rung in their reading development.

The *PLR* scales are especially helpful in providing teachers, parents, and administrators with a common measure for noting growth. The scales can be used to reflect individual student achievement as well as to examine the reading levels of groups of children. Scale scores can be aggregated to indicate the number and proportion of students reading at different levels. For example, records can be kept of the numbers of students who entered school at a particular stage, noting what percentage moved into what further stage. Such a method of reporting data provides a means for school communities to demonstrate to their public that they are fulfilling their responsibilities to all of their students. Using the scales in this way can enable schools to obtain an overall picture of their students' reading performance and to report this picture to their communities.[5]

---

[4] See description of Stage 3 and 4 on Reading Scale 2 in Appendix C.

[5] A number of validation studies have been done to ensure that the scales actually do represent a reliable assessment of student learning. A 1989 validation survey conducted by the Inner London Education Authority found high correlations between scale 2 levels and London Reading Test Scores. Another study of 400 students in Lewisham, England found that the first reading scale also correlates highly with other forms of assessment, including the British national curriculum's Standard Assessment Tasks (Feeney and Hann, 1991). Teachers in the NYAN *PLR* project have recently begun "moderation studies," where they each assign a scale score to a student after studying the student's *PLR* and its accompanying student work that serves as the *PLR*'s evidence base. Preliminary findings from these studies reveal a high degree of correlation amongst

While the use of a numbered scale to provide summative information about children opens the possibility for reducing the complexity of human development to a superficial simplicity, the scale numbers, for a variety of reasons, more closely reflect student growth and provide more meaningful information than aggregated test scores. The reading scales are derived from the most current research and knowledge about development and literacy learning, not the outmoded theories on which standardized tests are based. In addition, the scale scores are based on direct evidence of learning that is provided by teachers themselves - those most knowledgeable about the students. This approach to assessment is in contrast to the approach of standardized tests, which are developed and scored in distant places. And finally, in contrast to the unidimensional snapshots of students provided by tests, the scale scores are determined on the basis of a long-range view of student learning obtained from a variety of perspectives.

Myra Lefkowitz, a teacher at P.S. 84 in Manhattan, believes that the reading scales of the *PLR* are important in making it a real alternative to other standardized assessments. She spoke of this in an interview:

> In addition to observations you need some kind of a quantifiable mechanism that you can use to demonstrate progress and to fulfill Chapter 1's requirement of a pre and post test. The reading scales provide this information with the numbered stages. We need something like that if we are to get rid of standardized tests.

The Impact of the *PLR*

On Teaching and Learning

The 20 teachers who were a part of this study credit the *PLR* with positively influencing how they think about student learning and their teaching. 16 of the 20 teachers interviewed described how the *PLR* helped them in identifying children's strengths and interests. Toni Merritt of CES 42 in the Bronx said:

> The *PLR* has changed me as a teacher. I used to look at what children could not do and define them by their deficits. I've learned through my work with the *PLR* that if you think a child will fail, chances are he will. But if you look for what is special about that child, you'll begin to see

---

teachers' judgements. More sustained and formal studies need to be developed in the future to ensure the reliability and validity of this process.

things you never saw before and this is what will help you help that child grow.

The *PLR* has also helped teachers to individualize instruction so that it is more responsive to observed learner needs. 16 of the 20 teachers interviewed testified to this fact. Iliana Ordonez, who teachers third/fourth graders in a dual language class at PS 84 in Manhattan, typifies their views on this issue:

> Keeping the observational records of the *PLR* has helped me to gear my work to each child him or herself, individualizing and giving children the support they need. I've become aware that each child is learning at her own pace and that each child knows something and is good at something. The children know that I see that and it makes them feel secure. All of this has come to me through my work with the *PLR*.

Still other areas of teaching have been impacted by *PLR* use. 12 teachers felt that the *PLR* encouraged them to provide more opportunities for peer learning and collaboration while 15 said it encouraged them to provide more choices for students in the learning environment. 16 teachers cited how *PLR* use has helped them to observe student growth in diverse curriculum areas as well as social contexts. Jesus Munoz of CES 42 in the Bronx explains:

> The *PLR*'s approach to reading puts use of language in the context of real life instead of treating reading as a separate topic unrelated to anything else. Using it helped me to integrate reading with everything else I taught and with what was going on in the community and in my students lives. I also like the *PLR* because it has taught me a variety of strategies to help the beginning reader. I had previously relied mainly on phonics to teach reading and had used books whose only purpose was to teach children to read. Through the *PLR* I learned about all the strategies - semantic, syntactic and phonetic cues - that can be used to teach reading.

On Teachers' Instructional Strategies

As teachers have learned about literacy development through their exposure to the *PLR*, they have become increasingly aware and responsive to their students and, as a consequence, have significantly changed their literacy instructional strategies. Some of these changes cited by teachers that were also observed in many classrooms are: The use of children's literature rather than basal readers as the primary source for instruction; teachers' cultivation in their students of a broader range of strategies for making meaning out of print; the use of classroom libraries as a central aspect of the learning environment; regular opportunities provided in the classroom for reading

aloud by teachers to their students; classroom environments immersed in print; opportunities for student book-making and other projects that use a wide range of media as vehicles for students' literacy expression.

On School Placement Decisions

Even in the short span of time that the *Primary Language Record* has been used in the New York City public schools, it has had a significant impact on assessment procedures for diverse students in a variety of settings. In several instances the detailed information provided by *PLR* records has changed the course of special education placement decisions. The evidence collected in the *PLR* has helped evaluators, parents, and school personnel see previously unnoted student progress, providing insights into students' learning styles and strategies that have subsequently been useful for instruction.

The story of Marty, a five year old student at Brooklyn's P.S. 261, is one such case where the *PLR* made a significant contribution to the decision-making process for a special education placement. During his two years in Alina Alvarez's prekindergarten/kindergarten class, Marty appeared to have difficulties with speech. Because other children could not understand him when he spoke, Marty was unable to form social relationships. These difficulties were the cause of great concern to Alina and his family. Alina explains:

> I had him for two years - PreK and K. When he first came in I didn't understand him. No one did. Even his mother had difficulty understanding him. She could only make sense of his speech from its context. For a long time I watched him and made notes. His talk sounded like gibberish and seemed to be the reason that it was hard for him to make friends.

Alina kept track of Marty's progress for two years. She regularly recorded observations of him as he interacted with his peers in the classroom. Her documentation of these observations in the *PLR* provided evidence of the progress Marty was making:

> 10/5: Looks at letters on ABC chart to write his name.
>
> 12/1: Reads names on a chart of most kids in the class. Has memorized letter sounds. Is able to recall and talk about events that have happened outside the classroom, both spontaneously and when his memory is triggered by a book.

> 1/25: Can use language to explain his thinking and to share and describe his work to his classmates.

In addition to these observations, Alina collected samples of Marty's work. One drawing with stick figures on top and "pretend" script beneath it provided evidence that he understood the difference between print and pictures. Another piece on which he copied his name from a classroom chart demonstrated that he not only recognized his own name but could copy it himself. Another drawing that had an accompanying explanation in Marty's own invented spelling showed that he was beginning to make sound/symbol connections and that he was able to provide meaningful text to the images he drew.

In spite of Marty's steady progress, however, he was still "behind" others of his age and his mother eventually requested a special education referral. Alina was initially opposed to this referral:

> A mixed class is important to Marty because he imitates a lot. Why put him in some class with kids with same problems or who are worse off?

Nevertheless, Alina participated in the placement decision meeting, bringing to it the documentation of Marty's work that she had kept in the *PLR* for two years. This information clearly demonstrated that Marty was progressing in his efforts to use language meaningfully. It delineated his strengths as well as his needs and influenced those charged with deciding his future to forego special education certification in lieu of placement in an alternative mainstreamed program where he would receive the benefits of a heterogeneously-grouped classroom and the same kind of ongoing support he had experienced in Alina's classroom. Data from the *PLR* proved to be instrumental in helping the committee charged with deciding Marty's future to make this important decision.

On Professional Development

Teachers using the *PLR* are as diverse a group in their thinking and experience as the children they are teaching. Nevertheless the *PLR* has supported and challenged this variety of teachers in their views of what constitutes effective teaching. It has also provided them with a variety of entry points for their learning. Nearly every teacher who participated in this study cited at least one of the following benefits of *PLR* use for their own professional development: It has provided them with a systematic framework for observing and assessing literacy development and thus has helped

them organize their teaching of reading; it has increased teacher reflection on and reexamination of instructional practices; it has helped with overall classroom management and resulted in a reduction of student behavior problems.

Toni Merritt is an example of a teacher whose experience with the *PLR* has contributed to a major shift in the way she thinks about teaching. She teaches nine to eleven year old students identified as learning disabled, educable mentally retarded (EMR) at CES 42 in the South Bronx. As a new user of the *PLR* she is currently tracking the progress of only one child but is quick to add, "But it's changed the way I observe all children." Instead of viewing her students through their short-comings, she has begun looking at them through their strengths. In an interview she spoke of how her work with the *PLR* has changed the way she approaches children with learning differences:

> I've been teaching for eight years and I've always looked at the negative. No one ever taught me to think and talk about children positively. The *PLR* taught me how to look at kids in a positive light. Doing that makes teaching a lot easier and more rewarding.

Toni Merritt's experience is not unique. *PLR* work has also had an impact on her colleague Jesus Munoz, a bilingual special education teacher. In order to observe children in the way that is called for by the *PLR*, he has radically altered the structure of his classroom and the strategies he uses in his teaching. As he has learned about how literacy learning develops out of meaningful and purposeful experiences, he has replaced his basal readers with a rich classroom library of children's literature. As he has come to understand that proficient readers employ multiple strategies for making meaning out of print, he has broadened his instructional approach beyond phonics to support his students' use of many reading strategies. As he has developed an increased sensitivity to the power of interest as a motivating force for learning, he has rearranged the rows of desks in his classroom to develop environments, structures, and schedules that allow his students to choose among a range of learning experiences. As he has experienced how detailed observations of students provide insights and guides to instruction, he now regularly records his students' work within the format of the *PLR*. In an interview, he discussed how these changes have made him a more responsive and responsible teacher:

> Nothing so well tells a teacher what is going on in his class as having to record students' progress on a regular and frequent basis. Without such records, one might guess that one student seems to be doing a little

better this month than last, while another student is still struggling to learn at the same pace. With good recordkeeping, however, there is no guess work.

In still other settings, *PLR* work has served to validate teacher thinking and practices that have been in place for many years. This is the case at Central Park East 1(CPE I), an alternative public elementary school in District 4's East Harlem, whose school community has for decades been doing the kind of teaching and assessing that is compatible with the *PLR*. CPE teachers, recently introduced to the *PLR*, have found it to confirm and support many of their student-centered, developmental practices. Veteran Kindergarten/First Grade teacher Pam Cushing explains:

> The *PLR* project is the first project that we have heard of that sounded familiar, that fit in with what we were doing here. It helped me organize, made me look, gave me a system, a framework. And the *PLR* gave us a common language so that we could all talk about our work together.

In addition to supporting, among teachers and administrators, a view of teaching that centers on students, the *PLR* has also fostered new-found cooperation and collaboration among faculty in their schools. This is evidenced by the many *PLR* teachers who voluntarily gather together during their lunch or preparatory periods to hold conversations about children and their work. These conversations have led these teachers to adopt a wider circle of responsibility for their students. Teachers use each other, as well as other school personnel, for problem-solving about their work. It has even changed the roles and work of many paraprofessionals in the project. They have halted the practice of "skill and drill" directed towards a small group of needy students, and shifted instead to working collaboratively with the classroom teacher in a more integrated, holistic manner. At PS 261 in Brooklyn, paraprofessional Wilma Pacheco reported on some of the benefits of collaborating closely with her classroom teacher:

> Some kids respond to one teacher better than another. We share notes. With the *PLR*, we're working as a team.

Recommendations

This study demonstrates some of the ways that the *Primary Language Record* develops teachers' understandings and appreciation of diverse student needs. It also

reveals how these teacher understandings contribute to the creation of learning environments both responsive to and supportive of student strengths. Highlighted are the *PLR*'s Reading Scales - a feature that provides ways to convey to the public information about the progress of individuals as well as the progress of whole groups of students. And finally, the study demonstrates how student placement decisions can be enhanced by evidence collected in the *PLR*.

Professional Development and Support

The kind of careful look at students that the *PLR* provides is actually part of what many consider to be good teaching (Berliner, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1992; Doyle, 1978; Piaget, 1970; Shulman, 1987). As teachers come to recognize and value different student strengths, they in turn are better able to support a wider range of students in more responsive ways. But teachers cannot do this alone. They need professional development and support to learn how and when to use new forms of assessments, how to organize classrooms to support the kind of teaching that goes along with these assessments, and how to incorporate into their teaching the information they obtain from the assessments. This kind of learning cannot be accomplished by providing teachers only with a series of training sessions accompanied by instructional manuals. Instead, it requires ongoing support at the school site and ongoing opportunities for teachers to come together to dialogue and collaborate about their work.

NYAN's work in the *PLR* Project has provided just this kind of professional development and support. Teacher consultants work directly with teachers in their classrooms, supporting teacher change through modeling instructional practices, offering feedback, and providing information about learning theory as well as about literacy development. They also facilitate meetings with groups of teachers in their schools, and hold study groups and graduate courses after school hours for teachers who are at different points in their professional growth and at various stages of using the *PLR*. These gatherings are organized around teachers' issues and concerns, providing opportunities to deepen professional knowledge and to network with other professionals across the city. The agendas regularly include reading and discussion of theoretical articles on literacy development as well as conversation about related classroom experiences and student work. Some of the topics to which study sessions have been devoted are: Using the *PLR* for continuity from grade to grade; forming networks of *PLR* teachers within schools; working with unsupportive administration;

encouraging writing in the classroom; learning to do a miscue analysis; individualizing instruction; using evidence to inform the *PLR* documentation process.

Many teachers attribute a renewed sense of professional growth to their participation in these study groups. Louisa Cruz, a Kindergarten teacher from River East Elementary School in Manhattan said:

> [The study group] became a wonderful place to rehash, rethink, suffer through what you're doing everyday. A mixed group from different schools became completely supportive, completely collaborative. I knew whatever I brought to the group would be accepted. I learned five years of stuff in writing this year because of the impact of all the other teachers.

Districts and schools need to provide this kind of help if the benefits of the *PLR* are to be realized more broadly. This kind of professional development will also lessen the danger of the *PLR* being used inappropriately - as merely an alternative checklist or rating system that is separated from instruction and centers on bureaucratic needs not the needs of students.

While support of this kind requires substantial effort and initial financial outlay, expenses incurred are not what they seem. Because the *PLR* is simultaneously a professional development as well as an assessment tool, allocation of resources for the *PLR* is not only an investment in evaluation procedures but in the capacity-building of teachers and schools to teach in more effective and responsive ways.

Adopting the *PLR* as an Assessment and Evaluation Option

The *PLR*'s approach to teaching and learning is closely aligned with the educational outlook of New York State's *New Compact for Learning*. This reform plan (detailed most recently in the Final Report of the Curriculum and Assessment Council, *Learning Centered Curriculum and Assessment in New York State*, 1994) calls for a new system of curriculum, instruction, and assessment that is interrelated and interconnected; where assessment is embedded in teaching and learning and provides continuous information about students' potentials as well as about students' progress. In the design of this new system the State is cast in the role of providing supports for professional development - building the capacities of local organizations and professionals to develop the skills, understandings, and abilities that will enable them to teach diverse learners more effectively.

The *PLR* fits nicely into this context. Because it is based on a long-term view of student progress gathered from multiple sources of evidence, it can be used to inform,

instruct, and support the achievement and growth of *all* kinds of students, including students with special needs who are currently left out of the regular assessment process.[6]

The rich evidence base of the *PLR* provides expanded perspectives to those involved in making decisions about the road into or out of special education. In addition to helping better serve students so they do not need to go into special education, it better informs the Individualized Education Plans (IEP's) of those students who are already in special education programs. *PLR* use for such purposes gives increased integrity to special education's original intent and continuous efforts to meet the needs of diverse learners and to improve the quality of services for them.

Other special populations can also benefit from *PLR* use. The detailed information about the process of learning that the *PLR* provides can be useful in understanding, supporting, and tracking the language-acquisition process for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students. And finally, because the data provided by the *PLR* can be used to assess progress for individuals, groups, and whole programs, the *PLR* has the potential to be used (as the State of California is already doing) for both student and program evaluation of Chapter I services. The scales are a critical element here. By offering a vision of the full range of possibilities of what students can understand and be expected to do, the scales provide a way to incorporate the rating of students in special programs with the rating of students in general education. By outlining a broad range of student performances towards which schools can set their goals for *all* students, the scales lead assessment away from minimum-competency outlooks toward more informed developmental perspectives.

Towards Genuine Accountability

This kind of assessment of student learning provides families, students, and communities with "authentic" information about student learning, supporting teaching and learning not only for students, but for all those concerned with schools and schooling. Because the *PLR* reveals what goes into the learning process, what kinds

---

[6] Many special education students and students who qualify for bilingual programs are currently not included in the testing procedures administered to all students in New York City. This practice was originally intended to protect them from evaluations of their achievement that did not take into account the special circumstances affecting their learning. In reality, however, it has sometimes resulted in the deliberate placement in special programs of students who have been predicted to perform poorly, thus avoiding the impact of their low test scores on overall school performance ratings. This practice does disservice to both the students and the schools who are involved.

of environments support good teaching, and what kinds of practices support individual differences, those who come in contact with it develop better understandings about education.

Next Steps

While the *PLR* appears to be extremely successful as a professional development tool - supporting teachers to change their conceptions of teaching and to be more responsive to both the needs and strengths of diverse learners - it has not yet been significantly developed as a formal system-wide assessment. So while the information obtained from the *PLR* is changing the ways that teachers are teaching as well as the ways that students are learning, the ways that students are officially assessed do not yet value these changes or reveal this progress. This situation leaves teachers in the position of living in an "Alice in Wonderland" kind of world - what they value and know about supporting learning is contradicted by the way that learning is assessed (Darling-Hammond, 1989). Not until this tension is lessened will the learning and achievement of *all* students be able to be adequately supported.

Evidence from this and other studies demonstrate that the *PLR* holds the promise of doing just that. Future assessment reform efforts should be directed at:

- Increasing the *PLR*'s presence in more schools
- In schools where the *PLR* has been introduced, focusing professional development activities on helping teachers use it more consciously as an assessment instrument - filling out Part C's and utilizing the Scales.
- Spreading *PLR* use throughout whole schools in order to track student progress in general and student language acquisition and development across grade levels.
- Exploring the use of the *PLR* for evaluation of Chapter I services
- Developing *PLR* pilots as a legitimate option to standardized assessments currently in place.

While teachers will need continual support to develop the understandings and skills called for by *PLR* use, the most powerful support they can receive is the sanction of the system to use an assessment that they have long known is the way to best support their students - the long term process of collecting and analyzing authentic student performance and work.

References

Barr, M. and Cheong, J. (1993). *Achieving equity: Counting on the classroom.* Paper presented on March 12, 1993 at a symposium held in Washington D.C. on "Equity and Educational Testing and Assessment," sponsored by the Ford Foundation.

Barrs, M., Ellis, S., Hester, H., & Thomas A. (1988). *The Primary Language Record.* London: ILEA/Centre for Language in Primary Education.

Berliner, D. (1986). In pursuit of the expert pedagogue. *Educational Researcher,* August/September, pp. 5-13. Washington, D.C.: AERA.

Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation and Educational Policy. (1992). *The influence of testing on teaching math and science in Grades 4-12 (Vols. 1-5).* Boston: Boston College, Center for the Study of Testing, Evaluation, and Educational Policy.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1989). Curiouser and curiouser: Alice in testingland. *Rethinking Schools, 3*(2), 1, 17.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1991). The implications of testing policy for educational quality and equality, *Phi Delta Kappan, 73,* 3, 220-225.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1992). *Standards of practice for learner-centered schools.* New York: NCREST.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). *Federal policy options for Chapter I: An equity agenda for school restructuring.* New York: NCREST.

Dorr-Bremme, E. W., & Herman, J.L. (1986). *Assessing student achievement: A profile of classroom practices.* Los Angeles: University of California, Center for the Study of Evaluation.

Doyle, W. (1978). Paradigms for research on teacher effectiveness. In Lee S. Shulman (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education, Vol. 5.* Itasca, Ill.: Peacock.

Edelsky, C., & Harman, S. (1988). One more critique of reading tests - With two differences. *English Education, 20,* 157-171.

Falk, B. & Darling-Hammond, L. (1993). *The Primary Language Record at P.S. 261: How assessment transforms teaching and learning.* New York: NCREST.

Feeney, K., and Hann, P. (1991). *Survey of reading performance in year 2: summer 1991.* Lewisham, England: Lewisham Education.

Garcia, G., & Pearson, D. (1994). Assessment and diversity. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education, Vol. 20,* (pp.). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.

Gardner, H. (1983). *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences.* New York: Basic Books.

Kornhaber, M. & Gardner, H. (1993). *Varieties of excellence: Identifying and assessing children's talents.* New York: National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools, and Teaching (NCREST).

Medina, N. J. & Neill, D. M. (1988). *Fallout from the testing explosion.* Cambridge, Mass.: FairTest.

Miserlis, S. (1993). *The classroom as an anthropological dig: Using the California Learning Record (CLR) as a framework for assessment and instruction.* Unpublished paper.

New York State Curriculum and Assessment Council. (1994). *Learning-centered curriculum and assessment for New York State.* New York State Education Department: Albany, NY.

Oakes, J. (1990). *Multiplying inequalities: The effects of race, social class, and tracking on opportunities to learn mathematics and science.* Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality.* Yale University Press: New Haven.

Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1970). *The science of education and the psychology of the child.* New York: Penguin Books.

Resnick, L. B. (1989). *Tests as standards of achievement in schools.* Paper presented at the Educational Testing Service Conference, The Uses of Standardized Tests in American Education, New York.

Rothman, R. (1992, October 21). Study confirms 'fears' regarding commercial tests. *Education Week,* pp. 1, 13.

Shulman, L. (1987). Knowledge and teaching: Foundations of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review, 57,* 1-22.

Smith, D. & Robinson, S. (1986). Educating the learning disabled. In R. Morris and B. Blatt (Eds.), *Special education: Research and trends* (pp. 222-248). New York: Pergamon Press.

Wiggins, G. (1989). A true test: Toward more authentic and equitable assessment. *Phi Delta Kappan, 70,* 703713.

Wilson, M. & Adams, R. (1992). *Evaluating progress with alternative assessments: A model for Chapter 1.* Unpublished paper.

NEW YORK ASSESSMENT NETWORK

Fund for New York City Public Education
Janet Price
Sara Schwabacher

New York City Public Schools Office of Research, Evaluation & Assessment
John Schoener
Maureen Houtrides

Center for Educational Options, City College School of Education
Jill Benado
Suzanne Marten
Jane Spielman

Elementary Teachers Network, Institute for Literacy Studies, Lehman College
Elaine Avidon
Barbara Watanabe-Batton

Elementary School Assessment Project, Center for Collaborative Education
Priscilla Ellington
Heather Lewis
Vivian Wallace

PLR INTERVIEW LIST (Spring 1993)

PS 261 Boerum Hill, Brooklyn
District 15
Bilingual Special Education:
*Lucy Lopez (teacher)
Wilma Pacheco (paraprofessional)

Dual Language Kindergarten:
*Lorna Justice (teacher)

General Ed. Kindergarten:
*Alina Alvarez (teacher)

Discovery Program (gifted children):
*Joan Cherney (teacher)

Resource Room:
Harriet Leyden (teacher)

CES 42 South Bronx
District 9
Guidance Counselor:
*Joan Gadson

Bilingual Special Ed. K/ MIS 1
Kathy Aguiar (teacher)

Bilingual Special Ed./ MIS 4
*Jesus Munoz (teacher)

Monolingual Special Ed./ MIS 1
*Toni Merritt (teacher)

Principal:
Sandra Kase

PS 284 Brownsville, Brooklyn
District 23
Second Grade:
*Deborah Parker (teacher)

PS 144 Manhattan
District 3
*Mrs. P

PS 84 West Side, Manhattan
District 3
Dual Language 3/4:
Iliana Ordonez (teacher)

Dual Language Kindergarten:
Wanda Cruz (teacher)

Dual Language Kindergarten:
Asuncion Reyes (paraprofessional)

Chapter I/PCEN:
*Myra Lefkowitz (teacher)
Roz Friedus (teacher)

PS 156 South Bronx
District 7
General Ed. Fifth Grade:
*Phyllis Liverpool (teacher)
*Khadejha Ketter (teacher)

River East Manhattan
District 4
Pre K/K:
*Louisa Cruz (teacher)

Central Park East I Manhattan
District 4
K/1:
*Pam Cushing (teacher)

3/4:
Susan Gordon (teacher)

Pre K/K:
Yvonne Smith (teacher)

Resource Room:
Beth Vertucci ?

*individuals quoted or referred to in study

Primary Language Record

School Year

School

Name

DoB

Summer born child ☐

☐ Boy ☐ Girl

Languages understood

Languages read

Languages spoken

Languages written

Details of any aspects of hearing, vision or coordination affecting the child's language/literacy. Give the source and date of this information.

Names of staff involved with child's language and literacy development.

Part A To be completed during the Autumn Term

A1 Record of discussion between child's parent(s) and class teacher *(Handbook pages 12-13)*

Signed Parent(s) _____ Teacher _____

Date _____

A2 Record of language/literacy conference with child *(Handbook pages 14-15)*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Date _____

© ILEA/Centre for Language in Primary Education, 1988. Published in the U.S.A. by Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 038

Part B

To be completed during the Spring Term and to include information from all teachers currently teaching the child.

Child as a language user (one or more languages)

(Handbook pages 17-18)

Teachers should bear in mind the Authority's Equal Opportunities Policies (race, gender and class) in completing each section of the record and should refer to *Educational Opportunities for All?*, the ILEA report on special educational needs.

B1 Talking and listening

(Handbook pages 19-22)

Please comment on the child's development and use of spoken language in different social and curriculum contexts, in English and/or other community languages: evidence of talk for learning and thinking; range and variety of talk for particular purposes; experience and confidence in talking and listening with different people in different settings.

What experiences and teaching have helped/would help development in this area? Record outcomes of any discussion with head teacher, other staff, or parent(s).

B2 Reading

(Handbook pages 23-28)

Please comment on the child's progress and development as a reader in English and/or other community languages: the stage at which the child is operating (refer to the reading scales on pages 26-27); the range, quantity and variety of reading in all areas of the curriculum; the child's pleasure and involvement in story and reading, alone or with others; the range of strategies used when reading and the child's ability to reflect critically on what is read.

continued

B2 (continued)

What experiences and teaching have helped/would help development in this area? Record outcomes of any discussion with head teacher, other staff, or parent(s).

B3 Writing *(Handbook pages 29-34)*

Please comment on the child's progress and development as a writer in English and/or other community languages: the degree of confidence and independence as a writer; the range, quantity and variety of writing in all areas of the curriculum; the child's pleasure and involvement in writing both narrative and non-narrative, alone and in collaboration with others; the influence of reading on the child's writing; growing understanding of written language, its conventions and spelling.

What experiences and teaching have helped/would help development in this area? Record outcomes of any discussion with head teacher, other staff, or parent(s).

Signature of head teacher and all teachers contributing to this section of the record: _____

_____ _____

Part C To be completed during the Summer Term*

(*Handbook page 35*)

C1 Comments on the record by child's parent(s)

C2 Record of language/literacy conference with child

C3 Information for receiving teacher

This section is to ensure that information for the receiving teacher is as up to date as possible. Please comment on changes and development in any aspect of the child's language since Part B was completed.

What experiences and teaching have helped/would help development? Record outcomes of any discussion with head teacher, other staff, or parent(s).

Signed: Parent(s) _____ Class Teacher _____

Date _____ Head Teacher _____

**To be completed by the Summer half-term for 4th year juniors.*

Observations and Samples (Primary Language Record)

attach extra pages where needed

Name: **Year Group:**

1 Talking & listening: diary of observations

The diary below is for recording examples of the child's developing use of talk for learning and for interacting with others in English and/or other community languages.

Include different kinds of talk (e.g. planning an event, solving a problem, expressing a point of view or feelings, reporting on the results of an investigation, telling a story ...)

Note the child's experience and confidence in handling social dimensions of talk (e.g. initiating a discussion, listening to another contribution, qualifying former ideas, encouraging others ...)

The matrix sets out some possible contexts for observing talk and listening. Observations made in the diary can be plotted on the matrix to record the range of social and curriculum contexts sampled.

(Handbook pages 37-39)

	SOCIAL CONTEXTS				
LEARNING CONTEXTS	pair	small group	child with adult	small/large group with adult	
collaborative reading and writing activities					
play, dramatic play, drama & storying					
environmental studies & historical research					
maths & science investigations					
design, construction, craft & art projects					

Dates	Observations and their contexts

139

©ILEA/Centre for Language in Primary Education, 1988. Published in the U.S.A. by Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court St., Portsmouth, NH 03

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

2 **Reading and Writing: diary of observations**
(reading and writing in English and/or other community languages)

(Handbook pages 40-44)

Date	Reading
	Record observations of the child's development as a reader (including wider experiences of story) across a range of contexts.
	Writing
	Record observations of the child's development as a writer (including stories dictated by the child) across a range of contexts.

3 **Reading Samples** (reading in English and/or other community languages)

to include reading aloud and reading silently *(Handbook pages 45-49)*

Dates	
Title or book/text (fiction or information)	
Known/unknown text	
Sampling procedure used: informal assessment/running record/miscue analysis	
Overall impression of the child's reading: • confidence and degree of independence • involvement in the book/ text • the way in which the child read the text aloud	
Strategies the child used when reading aloud: • drawing on previous experience to make sense of the book/text • playing at reading • using book language • reading the pictures • focusing on print (directionality, 1:1 correspondence, recognition of certain words) • using semantic/syntactic/ grapho-phonic cues • predicting • self-correcting • using several strategies or over-dependent on one	
Child's response to the book/text: • personal response • critical response (understanding, evaluating, appreciating wider meanings)	
What this sample shows about the child's development as a reader. **Experiences/support needed to further development.**	

• *Early indicators that the child is moving into reading*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4 **Writing Samples** (writing in English and/or other community languages)

'Writing' to include children's earliest attempts at writing *(Handbook pages 50-54)*

Dates	
Context and background information about the writing: • how the writing arose • how the child went about the writing • whether the child was writing alone or with others • whether the writing was discussed with anyone while the child was working on it • kind of writing (e.g. list, letter, story, poem, personal writing, information writing) • complete piece of work/extract	
Child's own response to the writing.	
Teacher's response: • to the content of the writing • to the child's ability to handle this particular kind of writing • overall impression	
Development of spelling and conventions of writing.	
What this writing shows about the child's development as a writer: • how it fits into the range of the child's previous writing • experience/support needed to further development	

Please keep the writing with the sample sheet

Appendix B

LEARNING CONTEXTS	SOCIAL CONTEXTS				
	pair	small group	child with adult	small/large group with adult	individual
collaborative reading and writing activities					
play, dramatic play, drama & storying					
environmental studies & historical research					
maths activities					
design, construction, craft & art projects					
science activities					

Appendix C

Becoming a reader: reading scale 1

DEPENDENCE

Beginner reader 1	Does not have enough successful strategies for tackling print. Relies on having another person read the text aloud. May still be unaware that text carries meaning.
Non-fluent reader 2	Tackling known and predictable texts with growing confidence but still needing support with new and unfamiliar ones. Growing ability to predict meanings and developing strategies to check predictions against other cues such as the illustrations and the print itself.
Moderately fluent reader 3	Well-launched on reading but still needing to return to a familiar range of texts. At the same time beginning to explore new kinds of texts independently. Beginning to read silently.
Fluent reader 4	A capable reader who now approaches familiar texts with confidence but still needs support with unfamiliar materials. Beginning to draw inferences from books and stories read independently. Chooses to read silently.
Exceptionally fluent reader 5	An avid and independent reader, who is making choices from a wide range of material. Able to appreciate nuances and subtleties in text.

INDEPENDENCE

from The Primary Language Record Handbook for Teachers

Experience as a Reader across the curriculum: reading scale 2

INEXPERIENCED

Inexperienced reader 1	Experience as a reader has been limited. Generally chooses to read very easy and familiar texts where illustrations play an important part. Has difficulty with any unfamiliar material and yet may be able to read own dictated texts confidently. Needs a great deal of support with the reading demands of the classroom. Over-dependent on one strategy when reading aloud, often reads word by word. Rarely chooses to read for pleasure.
Less experienced reader 2	Developing fluency as a reader and reading certain kinds of material with confidence. Usually chooses short books with simple narrative shapes and with illustrations and may read these silently; often re-reads favourite books. Reading for pleasure often includes comics and magazines. Needs help with the reading demands of the classroom and especially with using reference and information books.
Moderately experienced reader 3	A confident reader who feels at home with books. Generally reads silently And is developing stamina as a reader. Is able to read for longer periods and cope with more demanding texts, including children's novels. Willing to reflect on reading and often uses reading in own learning. Selects books independently and can use information books and materials for straightforward reference purposes, but still needs help with unfamiliar material, particularly non-narrative prose.
Experienced reader 4	A self-motivated, confident and experienced reader who may be pursuing particular interests through reading. Capable of tackling some demanding texts and can cope well with the reading of the curriculum. Reads thoughtfully and appreciates shades of meaning. Capable of locating and drawing on a variety of sources in order to research a topic independently.
Exceptionally experienced reader 5	An enthusiastic and reflective reader who has strong established tastes in fiction and/or non-fiction. Enjoys pursuing own reading interests independently. Can handle a wide range of texts, including some adult material. Recognises that different kinds of texts require different styles of reading. Able to evaluate evidence drawn from a variety of information sources. Is developing critical awareness as a reader.

EXPERIENCED

from:The Primary Language Record Handbook for Teachers
© CLPE, 1988